

## [Cacique of the Tiguas]

Interview (?)

ELLIOTT: PW

Folklore

Cacique of the Tiguas

Dist # 20. El Paso, Texas

# 240 [620?] words Copy 213138 M. a. H. CACIQUE OF THE TIGUAS

Living in a house built by his father, over one hundred years ago, at Yeleta, [exas?], Damasio Colmenero bears the quiet dignity of a Tigua Chieftain, or Cacique.

He appears erect, and hardly looks the 72 years which he claims. He had been picking cotton all day, thereby providing a living for himself, two daughters and grand-children, the share the quaint adobe home—a long low building poorly ventilated, having earthen floors and sapling ceiling. The roof of the house has never leaked, for it consists of layers of adobe brick laid flat and chinked over with adobe mud.

There is one large room too which has been added, a tiny addition, which serves as a guest room and this little room was crowded with two or three straight chairs, center table, and a little dresser on which proudly reposed a recent picture of Demasio with his cherished drum.

The old man's face lighted momentarily from its stoical expression, as he talked of the drum, which had been a tribal possession from the long ago past. Its a war drum, fashioned from an old cotton wood (Alamo) log. Its present covering is cowhide, tied on

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with leather thongs, and Demasio does not know how many or what kind of hides on the old drum have previously summoned the Tiguas to War or celebration of victories. C-12. Texas

The Cacique was born in Yeleta, Texas in this house, which he claims is the first one built there, which makes it the oldest of the settlement. His mother died when he was seventeen and he learned to till the land of the little farm which his father had received as a land grant from the Spanish Governor.

His father (deceased) had bequeathed the house and land to the sons, and the little irrigated farm produced beans, corn and grain which helped to provide for the widow who assisted by making pottery in the primitive Indian fashion, which was different from the clay pots made by the Mexican potters. Her's were made of vivid red clay and decorated in bright colors and her son claims it was superior to the Mexican article. He seems very proud of being (Pure Indian) pure Indian which he claims for himself and a cousin, though he married outside the tribe his first and second wives (now deceased) were Mexican women.

Though he was too young to take part in the reprisals made by the Tigua tribe against Apache enemies he remembers going with the older brother who fought in combats at Tierra Hucco (Hucco Tanks), a mountain range Northeast of El Paso and an Apache Indian stronghold.

Daring bands of these Indians would sweep down on the little settlement at Yaleta, raiding the peaceful Tiguas and driving off their stock, stealing their grain and produce.

Sometimes it was necessary for the Tiguas to bring their stock into their houses for safe-keeping as the settlement was not fortified. Then when they were driven to it the older men of the tribe would follow the Apache's to the mountain and engage them in warfare. Even

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if only one enemy Apache was killed, the old war drum rang out in triumph and the Tiguas would hold a celebration at Yaleta.

When the American soldiers gradually subdued these enemies the Tiguas were left in peace to farm their little community which surrounded the beloved mission Corpus Christi Yaleta del Sur, for those were the christianized Indians settled hereby the Spanish in 1652. Damasio remembers the the Salt War when battles took place over the rights of the people who were engaged in hawling salt from salt Lake or Flats. There old trails led through San Elizario and near Yaleta and the little boy Damasio would steal out of the house and accompany the older brothers to watch the battles. During his lifetime he has seen the passing of the old frontier and development of a new one where modern machinery aids in producing farm products and cotton. He rides to the field in an automobile truck where with others he picks cotton all day during season.

His native Indian dress is used only in the ceremonial dances which take place all during the year in celebration of certain saint's days at the Mission.

Then the old drum awakes and Damasio beats the measures for the Matachine's dance which sometimes lasts all day and night. The title Cacique, or Chief, is bestowed from father to oldest son who is chosen for life. Other officers of the tribe are elected to serve for a certain length of time.

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